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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a survey questionnaire of beginning teachers who started duty in Queensland preschools or kindergartens in 1987. A brief summary is given of the literature on induction and beginning teachers, and a description provided of the organization of early childhood education in Queensland. At the beginning of the year, the areas in which the largest proportion of first-year teachers expressed confidence were interacting with children, communicating with parents, and program planning. However, they wanted help in programming as well as administration and strategies for interacting with particular children. A need was felt for assurance and moral support, especially at the start of their teaching careers. As the year progressed, teachers tended to become more concerned with task-oriented and child-oriented issues and less concerned for their personal security. The study indicated that the needs of a majority of beginning teachers were being met. The most frequent sources of help were advisory teachers, the director or teacher-in-charge of the center, and aides or assistants. Recommendations are made for improving the induction of beginning preschool teachers. (JD)

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THE INDUCTION OF PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS IN QUEENSLAND: THE VIEWS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

SP 030 816

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THE INDUCTION OF PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS IN QUEENSLAND: THE VIEWS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

Board of Teacher Education
P.O. Box 389, Toowong, Q. 4066.

August 1988

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

This report presents the results of a study into the induction of beginning teachers who commenced duty in Queensland preschools or kindergartens in 1987. The results are based on a questionnaire survey of beginning teachers, and on interviews with preschool and kindergarten advisers. As well as the results of the questionnaire and interviews, the report contains a brief summary of the literature on induction and beginning teachers. To provide a context for the study, the organisation of early childhood education in Queensland is described.

This study continues the Board of Teacher Education's interest in research into induction. The Board has previously undertaken its own research into the induction of beginning primary teachers (Board of Teacher Education, 1981a, b). It has also supported, through its research grants scheme, other projects on induction. One of these projects has been completed (Davis, 1988) while another study, being undertaken by a team of teacher educators from Brisbane College of Advanced Education, is in progress.

AIMS

The aims of the project on the induction of early childhood teachers are:

- to identify the induction needs of early childhood teachers;
- to describe the induction support currently available;
- to gain an indication of the adequacy of this support in meeting the needs of early childhood teachers; and
- to suggest ways in which early childhood teachers might most effectively be inducted into the teaching profession.

The focus of this study is concerned with induction in terms of professional development and support. Assessment of teaching performance, certification and commitment to teaching are not within the scope of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Selection of Beginning Teachers to Complete Questionnaire

The beginning teachers who were the focus of this study consisted of those teachers who commenced teaching in a Queensland preschool or kindergarten in the period January 1987 - September 1987 and who graduated from a teacher education program at the end of 1986 or mid-1987.

A list of all provisionally registered teachers teaching in state preschools and non-government kindergartens was compiled from the Board of Teacher Education's register of teachers. Names of teachers were checked against the list of teachers graduating from pre-service courses of early childhood education, or from primary education courses with an early childhood option, in 1986. The individual records of provisionally registered teachers who were not 1986 graduates from Queensland institutions were checked and those who graduated prior to 1986 were not included in the population.

In all, the population of beginning teachers comprised ninety-eight beginning teachers, six of whom participated in the pilot study. The remaining ninety-two were all included in the survey - of these, seventy-one worked in the state preschools, twenty-one in kindergartens.

Graduates of early childhood teacher education programs are also employed in child care centres or to teach early education classes. Early education classes are formed in smaller primary schools when preschool children are enrolled in the same class as pupils from the lower one or two year levels of the primary school. In order to clearly focus the research, it was decided not to include teachers in child care centres or teaching early education classes in the study. This allowed the research to concentrate on the induction needs and experiences of two particular groups of beginning teachers (preschool and kindergarten teachers). Research on the induction of teachers in early education classes and in child care centres would be valuable, but this must await further studies.

Compiling Questionnaire Items

Interviews outlining the aims of the study were held with: two educators from the School of Early Childhood Studies, Brisbane College of Advanced Education, two Regional Preschool Officers of the Department of Education, two second-year preschool teachers and two preschool advisers from the Creche and Kindergarten Association (C. & K.). The purpose of these interviews was to gain information about the context of early childhood education in Queensland and more specifically information about beginning teachers in preschools and kindergartens and the support available to them.

The information gained from these interviews was used in the compilation of a series of questionnaire items directed at fulfilling the aims of the study. These items sought information on: background of teachers, their present teaching situation, the types of help received by beginning teachers, the adequacy of help received, advisory visits and possible further sources of help. Drafts of the questionnaire were reviewed by the Board's Research Committee, and the draft questionnaires were sent to the original interviewees for comments. The questionnaire was then piloted with six first-year teachers; four from the state sector and two from community kindergartens.

Following trialling, some minor adjustments were made. The final questionnaire was posted out to beginning teachers in the week beginning 14 October 1987. Respondents were asked to return the completed questionnaires by 30 October 1987. A covering letter, explaining the purposes of the study, and assuring confidentiality, together with a reply-paid envelope for return postage was included with each questionnaire. A follow-up letter was forwarded to non-respondents early in November 1987. The questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix I.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with seven advisory teachers from two Brisbane regions and with three preschool advisers from the C. & K. The interviews sought information on the role of the advisers, the perceived needs of beginning early childhood teachers and the sources of support available to beginning teachers. Some of these advisers had experience as teachers and/or advisers in non-metropolitan areas. It is recognised, however, that their comments are not necessarily representative of advisers throughout the state.

CHAPTER 2

SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY: SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN QUEENSLAND

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The Concept of Induction

Schlechty (1985) has defined an 'effective' professional induction as a process in which

> 'new members ... to the occupation so internalise the norms peculiar to the group that they conform to these norms even when formal authority is not overtly present to uphold the norms'. (p. 37)

Griffin (1985) also speaks of the entry of new teachers into the school from the 'perspective of socialisation into the norms or standards of (the) existing organisation' (p. 43). He argues that new teachers respond quickly to the norms of their school situation; indeed, their idealistic notions which had been fostered during pre-service training are often abandoned quite rapidly. He admits, however, that new teachers' abandonment of ideals may be temporary only.

The tendency for new teachers to move quickly towards adopting the norms of the school has also been noted by other writers. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) conceptualise this process as one in which the college experience is 'washed out' by the reality of school. Corcoran (1981) refers to 'transition shock' as a process in which the teacher has to deal, quickly, with the mismatch between expectations and reality.

Conformity, however, is not a necessary or desirable outcome of induction. Tisher, Fyfield and Taylor (1979, p. 1), for instance, argue that 'teachers can be creative forces ... [with] considerable potential to shape the milieu in which they work'. From their review of the literature, Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) concluded that the view that the effects of pre-service programs are 'washed out' by school experience should be treated with some scepticism. In a later article, Zeichner and Tabachnick (1985, p. 4) suggest that even when conformity is an outcome of induction 'it occurs in different degrees, in different forms, has different meanings for different individual teachers and within different institutional contexts'. From their case study of four beginning teachers, Zeichner and Tabachnick (1985) concluded that it is possible for beginning teachers to express their ideals.

To facilitate the socialisation of beginning teachers, various induction programs have been developed and are described in the literature (e.g. Fox and Singletary, 1986; Huling-Austin, 1986; Varah, Theune and Parker, 1986).

These programs have the following common goals:

1. to foster the professional development of the beginning teacher; and
2. to improve the beginning teacher's teaching performance.

Other goals sometimes outlined are:

1. to satisfy mandatory requirements for certification; and
2. to increase the new teacher's commitment to teaching, and thereby increase subsequent retention of promising young teachers.

Effectiveness of Induction

While previous research on induction has largely been concerned with beginning primary and secondary teachers, the results of this research provide a useful background against which to consider the induction of early childhood teachers.

The problems of beginning teachers were thoroughly canvassed in a review of the literature by Veeman (1984). This review showed that the five most seriously perceived problems of beginning teachers were classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences among students, assessing students' work and relations with parents. With respect to the provision of induction support, Veeman found that 'formal programs for the induction of beginning teachers are not implemented on a large scale' (Veeman, 1984, p. 164).

In Queensland, there are clearly some schools which provide an excellent induction for new teachers. Examples of such primary school induction programs are documented in the Board of Teacher Education's (1981b) report. At the system level, the major employing authorities provide publications to assist schools in the induction of beginning teachers into the profession. Yet, recent research undertaken by Davis (1988) on induction in Queensland primary schools found that:

> 'Induction programs ... were not being conducted in a large number of Queensland primary schools. It was also shown that in those schools where induction programs were conducted, many of the needs of beginning teachers were not being met'. (Davis, 1988, p. 2)

Stages of Teachers' Careers

Several authors (Fuller, 1969, 1974; Katz, 1972; Vonk, 1983) have conceptualised the teacher's career as proceeding in a series of developmental stages or steps. In her later work, Fuller (1974) conceptualised the stages through which teachers proceed after they commence teaching as belonging to three broad categories. The first stage relates to concerns about self; many of these are non-teaching concerns and include such things as concern about one's own feelings and about survival in the classroom. The second stage concerns are those associated with the teaching task and are related to the teacher's performance: for example, about how he or she sounds, about discipline, about what to do if the teacher does not know the answer to a child's question. The third stage is concern about impact and focuses on the impression which the teacher is making on the pupils' learning and the extent to which the teacher can cater for the pupils' needs. Fuller argues that early concerns about survival must be dealt with before the concerns at the next stage can emerge. That is, a teacher's strategies for survival must be established to enable him or her to proceed to the next stage.

Katz (1972) extends this conceptualisation well beyond the beginning year to include further stages which may be reached after three or five years of experience. Vonk (1983) distinguishes an initial period, which he terms the 'threshold period'; once a teacher has survived this she or he 'grows up'. In addition, he distinguishes concerns at two levels in each of these stages - a 'micro' or specific teaching concern (e.g. pupil control, class organisation), and a 'macro' or broader organisational concern (e.g. contacts with colleagues, parents, etc.). He further maintains that concerns during the threshold period change as the teacher comes to settle many of his or her initial 'survival' problems. The end of the threshold period is marked by such gains as:

- insight into the structure of most groups of pupils, and recognition of different methods for treating different groups;
- familiarity with content material;
- confidence with career selection;

- confidence in appraisal of children's reactions;
- acceptance of the teacher by children and colleagues;
- insight into the culture of the school.

The period of 'growing up' is characterised by further professional development in terms of personal style, adaptability to varying situations, experimentation, and so on.

These stage theories of teachers' careers indicate that the beginning teaching period is one which encompasses a complex developmental process, and in which the teacher's expertise and orientation change over time.

The Bassett report (1978 Review: Teacher Education in Queensland, 1978) conceptualises this period as a three strand process of orientation, adaptation and professional development. **Orientation** is a form of introduction to the school, a process of familiarising the beginning teacher with essential information. The Bassett Committee suggested that this information could be provided by the use of printed material which contained details of legal and departmental matters, information about the local community and information about the school. The Committee also considered that meetings at which new teachers were introduced to the school and the community and asking a colleague to assist the beginning teacher with practical matters such as school policy and organisation could be useful in the process of orientation.

Adaptation involves various arrangements, often administrative, which may ease the beginning teacher's transition into the teaching role. This might be achieved, for example, by giving beginning teachers a lighter teaching load, avoiding giving the new teacher difficult classes, and using a team teaching arrangement to enable the beginning teacher to have a variety of teaching experiences and to develop new skills with support and friendly criticism.

Development refers to a teacher's professional growth, and can be thought of as roughly corresponding with the stages of teachers' careers outlined above. It involves a process of relating ideas and actions, of reflection and critical self-assessment. An experienced colleague assigned to help the new teacher, other school staff and outside support can be used to help the new teacher's development.

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHING

A Different Context from Primary and Secondary Teaching

Queensland preschool and kindergarten teachers work in a somewhat different context from primary and secondary teachers who have been the focus of previous research. Given the differing contexts, the problems of beginning preschool and kindergarten teachers and the adequacy of their induction may vary from those reported in the literature in relation to beginning primary and secondary teachers. The most pertinent differences are described below.

First, the early childhood area appears to be pervaded by a distinctive philosophy and value base. The Education 2000 Discussion Paper, for instance, acknowledges the child-centred and developmentally-oriented approach to preschool education with emphasis on 'an informal approach, and on the provision of an unhurried, accepting atmosphere in which initiative, independence and self-confidence in children are valued' (Department of Education, 1985, p. 23). Preschool teachers also appear to share among themselves a set of common beliefs and assumptions about learning and development (Tainton, 1983).

A survey of early education classes undertaken by the Queensland Department of Education showed that:

'compared to primary school children, [teachers'] approach to the pre-schoolers is more child-centred, more individualised, more activity-based, less routined, more flexible, involves more integration of subject matter, more child choice of activities, more freedom of movement for the children, less orientation to the acquisition of specific knowledge and more attention to the process of acquiring knowledge'. (Turner and Miles, 1980, p. 106).

Thus, the beginning teachers' concern with pupil 'control' which emerges in the literature is likely to have a far lower prominence in the early childhood area.

Second, the beginning preschool or kindergarten teacher usually commences duty in a small centre which is, in turn, placed within a broader environment structured by the advisory services of either the State Department of Education or the Creche and Kindergarten Association. Personnel from these advisory services are experienced teachers; they establish and maintain contact with their teachers and offer assistance in a wide variety of ways during the school year. By contrast, beginning primary and secondary teachers usually commence duty in schools which have on staff a principal and a number of experienced teachers who are able to provide induction support for new teachers.

Third, the preschool or kindergarten culture is less 'established' when a new teacher commences duty. With a new group of children each year and a new teacher, the group must, to a certain extent, establish its own culture. Potential consequences of this are: (a) the new teacher may maintain his or her own philosophical orientation with reduced conflict with the established 'norms' of the centre; and (b) the new teacher may be far more isolated and 'lost' without the support provided by a context which is 'up and running'.

Fourth, the outcomes of early childhood education focus on different domains to those of other levels of education. Thus evaluating the degree of success of early childhood education programs in terms of outcomes can be difficult. This may have implications for the advisory service and for the early childhood teacher's self-evaluation of specific teaching strategies.

Organisation of Early Childhood Education in Queensland

Within the state sector, early childhood education is offered by preschools under the control of the Queensland Department of Education. The Department of Education also provides early childhood education in small primary schools through the integration of preschool children with children in the lower year level or levels of the primary school. These early education classes were, however, not considered in this study. Early childhood education is also provided in kindergartens managed by independent parent committees or community groups (the community sector).

Organisation within the state sector

Preschools are usually associated with a primary school, but they operate independently from that school. They normally take in two groups of children per unit, for the year immediately prior to Year 1 (age 4-5 years); the groups may be organised such that the centre runs a 'half-day program' (one group attending for five mornings, the other group attending for five afternoons), or a 'full-day program' (where each group comes for two full days and one half day). The maximum number for each group is twenty-five children. In some instances (e.g. country preschools with children travelling large distances) these attendance arrangements may be altered.

Each preschool centre is organised into one or more units. Each unit has one teacher, an aide, its and own area and equipment. In multiple-unit centres, the teachers work fairly independently of one another, planning and implementing their own programs. One teacher (the teacher in charge) is responsible for the administration of the centre, although the teacher in charge is not in a senior position with respect to advising on other teachers' programs.

Within the state sector, preschool education is administered by a Division of Preschool Education. The Division has a fairly flat structure, with one Regional Preschool Officer (RPO) assigned to, and in charge of, each of the regions of the Department of Education in Queensland. All teachers working in preschools are responsible to the RPO of the region in which they work.

There is also a team of advisory teachers in each region, whose task is to provide a support system for the teachers. Each preschool teacher has an adviser, and each adviser has a number of preschool teachers to support. Advisory teachers are preschool teachers with at least three years' experience; they normally work as an adviser for a maximum of three years after which they return to a preschool.

There are a number of Early Childhood Resource Centres throughout Queensland. Some of the resource centres are actually working preschools. The resource centres provide practical equipment for use with the children, as well as material for professional development. Resources are available for teachers working in both the state and community sectors. These centres also provide a meeting place for teachers, including a place for incoming teachers to meet others, and can be used as venues for workshops and seminars.

Organisation within the community sector

Kindergartens within the community sector have a more diverse set of organisational arrangements and cater for a wider age range of children than preschools in the state sector.

The Creche and Kindergarten Association (the C. & K.) is a non-government organisation which helps communities to establish their own local kindergartens and child care centres. The Association offers an advisory service to community kindergartens and has established resource centres.

Community kindergartens can be classified into three main categories:

1. Those affiliated with the C. & K. - affiliation requires that the kindergarten meets certain criteria, specified by the C. & K., and that the kindergarten is inspected by the C. & K.; it also receives support from the C. & K. and a government subsidy. There are over 220 affiliated kindergartens.
2. Those not affiliated with the C. & K., but which pay a fee and receive the C. & K. advisory services. There are over 120 such centres.
3. Those kindergartens with no connections with the C. & K.

Community kindergartens may cater for 3-4 year olds as well as 4-5 year olds. They may also take three groups of children (occasionally there are four), with younger groups usually attending for less time per week than the older groups. Groups are normally run separately (in terms of age). Twenty-five children per group is the maximum number recommended by the C. & K. for a group of 4-5 year olds; and twenty is the recommended maximum group size for 3-4 year olds. These arrangements may be altered where necessary.

As with state preschools, kindergartens are organised into one or more units, with

each unit having its own teacher, assistant, area and equipment, and program. One teacher, the director, is responsible for administrative matters.

Community kindergartens are usually administered by a voluntary committee of parents elected from among parents of children attending the kindergarten. Each committee employs its own teachers and assistants and committees are independent of one another. As described above, preschool advisers, employed by the C. & K. Association, provide advice and support to kindergarten teachers.

Resource centres, offering a similar service to those in the state sector, have been established, although not nearly as widely through Queensland as those established by the state sector.

CHAPTER 3

THE VIEWS OF THE ADVISERS: RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

The information gained from the interviews is presented as a description of the advisory services from the advisers' point of view. All points of view presented would not necessarily be held by all advisers.

Role of the Advisory Service

The advisory service in both the government and community sectors is guided by the philosophy that the advisory system should be responsive to the needs of teachers. The advisers therefore see their role as facilitative and supportive, rather than directive. As one adviser put it: '[Beginning preschool teachers] need a support system they can control - not one that tells them what they should and shouldn't be doing'.

The preschool advisers considered that it was important to provide an environment in which beginning teachers could develop professionally, as opposed to one in which teachers became dependent on their advisers to tell them or show them what to do. Thus, the advisers 'prefer to let the teacher have a go at it', and to try a number of different approaches. Preschool advisers can offer suggestions, but they emphasise to teachers that the final choice must be the teachers' own.

Teachers are also encouraged to think about teaching, to see teaching as a creative process in which they have the freedom to try out their own ideas, to consider the type of teacher they want to be, and to be reflective about their own professional growth.

The facilitative role of the advisers may not be well-understood initially by beginning teachers. As one adviser commented: 'We have to work on first-years to let them know we're not an extension of college'. Similarly, the comment was made that beginning teachers are 'surprised when you don't give evaluative comments'. It was reported by one advisory teacher that 'sometimes first-years are reluctant to ask for advice - they feel they should know how to do it'.

Advisers try to visit teachers within the first two weeks of the school year, although this is not always possible. The purpose of this visit is for the adviser to introduce himself/herself to the preschool teacher, to explain the advisory role, and to ask the teacher if there is anything he or she wishes to talk about with the adviser. This first visit is important in establishing a rapport between teacher and adviser, a rapport which is essential to the success of the advisory service. Discussions between advisers and teachers prior to the teacher taking up an appointment are also encouraged.

Within the C. & K. system, the advisers have a dual role in that they work with the committee of the kindergarten in setting and maintaining standards for building and equipment. The way in which this dual role is handled by the adviser varies with the individual; some find no problems, others may find that their advisory function is inhibited, to some extent, by their supervising function.

Needs of Beginning Teachers as Perceived by Advisers

Some of the preschool advisory teachers and advisers suggested that beginning teachers had 'survival' needs. Their college programs had been one of learning about what is 'out there' in preschools. However, some advisers commented that student teaching cannot adequately prepare prospective teachers for the situation in which, as

beginning teachers, they have full responsibility for classes of preschool or kindergarten children. Beginning teachers can therefore feel insecure, and can 'suddenly get a sense of not being really in control, and feeling very alone'.

It is considered important, nonetheless, for beginning teachers 'to have a go' and to try their own way of working, with support, but without a hierarchy of superiors looking over their shoulders. Advisers reported that beginning teachers must discover for themselves their own strengths and weaknesses. In order to accomplish this, beginning teachers needed time to get to know the children in their class, to work out their own ideals and teaching style, and to consider what they wished to achieve with the children. Thus, in many ways professional advice is best able to be used by beginning teachers after they have experienced a period of teaching so that problem areas can become evident. At the very beginning of their teaching careers, teachers need assurance and moral support and to know that there is 'someone there if they get into trouble'.

From the point of view of the advisers, the most apparent needs of beginning teachers are:

- dealing with children with behaviour problems;
- interacting with parents;
- programming;
- the practicalities of running a preschool centre.

One preschool adviser described how interacting with parents can be particularly stressful for beginning teachers: beginning teachers are still developing their ideas about children, yet parents often expect the teachers to have all the answers and to be given advice about their child by the preschool teacher. If the beginning teachers are unable to give parents the type of advice they expect, then this can create tension.

Other Sources of Support

Advisory teachers do not wish to be seen as the 'experts', as the only sources of support for beginning teachers. Another important support for beginning teachers is meeting with other beginning early childhood teachers. These meetings allow beginning teachers to talk among themselves, to share their ideas, and to see how other teachers have adapted to their roles. As well, advisory teachers may offer advice at meetings of beginning teachers. Some of these meetings are formally arranged; for example, in both the community and government sectors, regional meetings of first-year teachers are held in the first few months of the school year. In their final term, students enrolled in the Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood) program at Brisbane College of Advanced Education attend the C. & K. headquarters for an administration lecture. Informal meetings may also be held between groups of beginning teachers. To this end, the Early Childhood Resource Centre in at least one Brisbane region is open until 5 pm for three days a week. It was reported that beginning teachers take advantage of this as a meeting place to talk among themselves.

Advisers listed several other sources of support for beginning teachers. These included: other teachers in the centre, parents, the Early Childhood Teachers Association, guidance personnel, friends, teachers in other centres, and the teacher's aide or assistant.

With reference specifically to aides, the comment was made that the teacher aide can be 'a wonderful source of support'. On the other hand, it was reported that the aide can obstruct the new teacher if he or she wishes to change the routine of the centre which the aide has been used to over a number of years.

CHAPTER 4

THE VIEWS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS: RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

This chapter gives details of the response rates to the questionnaire and describes the characteristics of preschool and kindergarten teachers who returned questionnaires and the types of preschools and kindergartens in which they worked. The type of initial contact and orientation which beginning teachers experienced is then described, followed by a consideration of the self-perceived needs of beginning teachers both generally and in a number of specific areas. This is followed by teachers' comments on the support available to beginning teachers: particular attention is paid to advisory visits and contact with other teachers. Finally, beginning teachers' views on the type of support which they believe should be available is briefly considered.

RESPONSE RATE

Of the ninety-two questionnaires distributed, seventy-seven were returned, although two of these were subsequently discarded: one was from a teacher who had worked mainly as a relieving teacher and found many of the questions inapplicable to her situation; the other was from a teacher who although completing a pre-service teacher education program in 1986 had previously worked as an early childhood teacher. Thus, the final achieved sample comprised seventy-five teachers. Fifty-nine out of seventy-one teachers from the state sector returned questionnaires and 16 out of twenty-one teachers from the community sector returned questionnaires. This represented a response rate of 83 per cent and 76 per cent respectively from the state and community sectors respectively.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLES

All but one of the respondents were Diploma of Teaching graduates from various institutions in Queensland. Table 1 presents a breakdown of the particular qualifications and institutions represented. Most of the kindergarten teachers held a Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood) from the Brisbane College of Advanced Education. The preschool teachers were about evenly divided between those who held a Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood) and a Diploma of Teaching (Primary/Preschool). All but two respondents had completed studies at the end of 1986, with the two exceptions completing their studies in June 1987.

Table 1: Teaching qualification and institution of study of respondents

AWARD	INSTITUTION	STATE (N=58)	COMMUNITY (N=16)
Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood)	Brisbane College of Advanced Education	27	13
Diploma of Teaching (Primary/Preschool)	Brisbane College of Advanced Education	22	1
Diploma of Teaching	James Cook University	5	1
Diploma of Teaching	Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education	4	-
Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood)	Mitchell College of Advanced Education (NSW)	-	1

Most respondents (72 per cent) commenced teaching in January 1987. The remaining 28 per cent commenced in the months since then, and all had commenced by July 1987. Ten per cent of respondents had worked in more than one preschool or kindergarten since their initial appointment.

As noted above, fifty-nine (79 per cent) respondents taught in state preschools and sixteen (21 per cent) respondents taught in community kindergartens. Of these sixteen teachers working within the community sector, thirteen taught in C. & K.-affiliated centres, one taught in a C. & K. contact centre, and two worked in centres with no connections with the C. & K. Association.

In order to gain an indication of the spread of beginning preschool and kindergarten teachers throughout Queensland, the localities of the centres were categorised as follows:

urban - all those centres in suburbs of Brisbane, Bundaberg, Mackay, Gladstone, Townsville, Cairns, Rockhampton;

small town, coastal - all those centres which are located in small towns in the coastal region;

west - all centres west of the Great Dividing Range.

Table 2 shows the distribution of centres by locality. Sixty-four per cent of teachers were teaching in centres located in urban areas; 20 per cent were teaching in western areas.

Table 2: Location of centres in which beginning teachers were teaching

LOCALITY	STATE (N=54)	COMMUNITY (N=16)
Urban	33	12
Small coastal town	8	3
West	13	1

Sixty per cent of respondents taught in a multi-unit centre, the most common of these being a double unit (48 per cent). Forty per cent worked in a single-unit centre (see Table 3) and 45 per cent held the position of teacher-in-charge or director. Fifty-three per cent of respondents held the position of teacher, with no additional administrative responsibilities, while two teachers shared these responsibilities as co-directors (Table 4). Beginning kindergarten teachers were more likely than preschool teachers to teach in single-unit centres and be in charge of the centre.

Table 3: Number of units in centres in which beginning teachers were teaching

NUMBER OF UNITS	STATE (N=59)	COMMUNITY (N=15)
One	21	9
Two	31	5
Three	3	1
Four	4	-

Table 4: Number of beginning teachers holding various positions

POSITION	STATE (N=58)	COMMUNITY (N=16)
Teacher-in-charge/director	24	9
Co-director	-	2
Teacher	34	5

BEGINNING TEACHING

Initial Contact

Eighty-three per cent of respondents reported having some type of contact with their centre before they commenced duty - this proportion was the same for those commencing in the state and community sectors. The proportion also varied little for teachers commencing teaching in various areas of Queensland; for example, 86 per cent of urban teachers reported having contact prior to duty, while 79 per cent of western teachers reported having such contact.

Table 5: Number of beginning teachers having various types of contact with their centres prior to commencing duty

TYPE OF CONTACT	STATE (N=51)	COMMUNITY (N=13)
Met other staff of the centre	38	11
Spent time at the centre -		
. with at least some children of their own group	12	6
. with children but not necessarily of their own group	4	0
. without children present (i.e. during holidays)	20	3
Had phone contact	9	1
Had information posted to them	2	1
Became familiar with the routine	4	3
Attended a social occasion, e.g. barbecue	2	4
Met some parents	5	4
Other	7	2

Table 5 shows that forty-nine respondents met other staff of the centre, and twenty-three spent some time at the centre while there were not children present; eighteen beginning teachers spent time at the centre with at least some children from the group whom they would be teaching. Ten teachers had telephone contact with the centre and nine met parents of children in the centre before they commenced teaching. The category 'other' includes: one teacher who began at a new centre and so was involved in the setting-up - ordering equipment, etc.; another teacher who had been working in a voluntary capacity at the centre during her training; and a few teachers who were involved in parent interviews prior to the commencement of the school year.

Again, there were few differences between teachers in the state and community sectors in relation to type of initial content. It is of interest to note, nonetheless, that beginning teachers in community kindergartens were more likely to have spent time at the centre with children from their own group, while state preschool teachers were more likely to have attended their centre while children were not present. Beginning kindergarten teachers were also more likely to have met some parents or attended a social function.

There were some differences between teachers in the various locations regarding the type of initial contact they had with their centre. Individual teachers in urban areas tended to have more types of contacts than teachers in non-urban areas. Non-urban teachers were less likely to have met parents or attended a social event, met other staff of the centre or spent time with children from their own group prior to beginning teaching.

Orientation Program

Thirty-six per cent of beginning teachers (33 per cent of the state sector and 47 per cent of the community sector beginning teachers) reported that they had participated in a special introduction or orientation program when they took up duty. Some of the purposes associated with an orientation program may, however, have been fulfilled during the initial contact with the centre, as described above.

The most common types of orientation activities in which beginning teachers reported being involved were: attending a special orientation program for first-year preschool teachers (9 respondents), receiving some introduction from other teachers in the centre (5), participating in the orientation program of the associated primary school (4), and working with the previous teacher (4).

PERCEIVED NEEDS OF BEGINNING PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Areas of Confidence

Respondents were asked to list the areas in which they felt both confident and not so confident when they began teaching. Responses to this question have been broadly classified and the result of this classification is shown in Table 6.

Table 6 shows that the largest numbers of beginning teachers expressed confidence in the following areas: interacting with children, story-telling, communicating with parents and program planning. Interestingly, communicating with parents and program planning were two of the areas in which a large number of beginning teachers expressed a lack of confidence. Other areas in which a lack of confidence was felt by a substantial number of teachers were administration and teaching music. These results show, in broad terms, the self-perceived areas of confidence and lack of confidence of beginning teachers. They do emphasise, nonetheless, the nature of individual differences in these areas. For example, substantial numbers of teachers indicated that they were most confident in program planning and in communicating with parents; on the other hand, many teachers said that these were the areas in which they were least confident. Even with respect to interacting with children - the area in which most teachers felt confident - two beginning teachers reported that this was an area in which they were least confident.

Table 6: Areas in which beginning teachers indicated that they were confident and not so confident when they began teaching

AREA	CONFIDENT		NOT SO CONFIDENT	
	State (N=55)	Community (N=16)	State (N=55)	Community (N=15)
Interacting with children	24	3	2	-
Organising and managing children	6	4	5	4
Organisation of unit or centre	6	1	2	1
Program planning	8	5	17	1
Planning for individual children	3	-	4	1
Content areas:				
. story-telling/language	14	3	-	-
. music	7	-	8	6
. art	4	2	-	-
. other content areas	4	5	5	2
Administration	2	2	14	4
Working with the teacher aide	2	1	7	2
Communicating with parents	12	1	19	3
Other	11	5	6	2

Areas in which Help was Needed

Respondents were requested to describe the areas in which they felt they needed most help in their first few months and whether their needs had changed throughout the year. Those teachers whose needs had changed were also asked to explain how their needs had changed. The responses to these questions have been classified into three broad categories - personal needs, task-oriented needs and child-oriented needs and into a number of sub-categories. The results are summarised in Table 7.

The table shows that in the first few months' teaching teachers reported needing help in task-oriented areas and in the personal domain. More specifically, there was a reported need for reassurance from other teachers (including advisers) that the beginning teacher was 'doing the right thing'. Within the needs classified as task-oriented, the most frequently mentioned were programming, practical ideas or 'how to do things' and administration.

Later in the year, there was a reported shift in emphasis towards more child-centred concerns. Concerns about the teaching task were still mentioned relatively frequently, but only a handful of teachers indicated that reassurance was still an important need. Indeed, sixteen teachers reported that their confidence had improved since their first few months' teaching.

Table 7: Types of help which beginning teachers reported that they needed early in the year and later in the year

TYPE OF HELP	EARLY IN THE YEAR		LATER IN THE YEAR	
	State (N=55)	Community (N=17)	State (N=42)	Community (N=13)
Personal				
. Reassurance from other teachers	25	7	2	2
. Support from parents	1	1	-	-
Task-oriented				
. Program planning	17	4	5	1
. Practical ideas	11	5	7	3
. Administration	7	3	1	-
. Policy	2	2	-	-
. Critical feedback on teaching	3	-	3	-
. Other	4	1	2	-
Child-oriented				
. Catering for children in general	2	-	10	1
. Catering for children with special needs	4	1	4	1
Other				
. Developing a philosophy of teaching	-	-	2	-
. Became more confident	n.a.	n.a.	11	5

Specific Areas of Help

In addition to the open-ended questions designed to elicit the beginning teachers' perceptions of their needs, the teachers were asked a number of questions referring to a specific list of seventeen areas of a teacher's work. Respondents were requested to rate, on a five-point scale ranging from 'very important' to 'not at all important', how important it was for them to have had support in each of the areas. They were also asked to indicate those areas in which they had not received satisfactory assistance. The numbers of respondents indicating that it was very important for them to have had help in each area, and the numbers who reported that satisfactory assistance was not available are shown in Table 8.

Overall, the four areas perceived as most important by the beginning teachers were: assurance and moral support, programming, strategies for particular children and administration. Within the community sector, a reasonably high proportion (at least one-third) of beginning teachers also considered the following issues to be very important: working with committees, working with the assistant, strategies for beginning with the group and working with particular parents.

The six areas most frequently indicated by beginning teachers as those in which help was not available were: strategies for particular children, working with professionals (e.g. doctor, speech therapist), administration, legal matters, assurance and moral support, and programming. In each case, however, fewer than 20 per cent of the teachers considered that satisfactory support was not available. Working with committees was also mentioned relatively frequently by teachers in the community sector as an area in which satisfactory support was not received.

Table 8: Number of beginning teachers rating specific areas of help as very important and number indicating that they needed some support but did not receive satisfactory assistance

AREA	VERY IMPORTANT		HELP NOT RECEIVED	
	State (N=59)	Community (N=16)	State (N=59)	Community (N=16)
Assurance/moral support	33	11	13	2
Programming	28	5	14	1
Teaching strategies	15	4	7	-
Classroom management and organisation	15	4	8	1
Strategies for particular children	28	5	18	4
Strategies for beginning with your group(s)	9	7	6	4
Equipment selection	1	2	6	1
Guidance in your 'reflective' thinking, e.g. clarification of your beliefs about how children learn	12	2	3	2
Legal matters	6	5	13	3
Administration	20	6	14	7
Working with your aide/assistant	9	6	6	2
Working with particular parents	9	5	10	3
Working with committees	2	8	8	6
Working with other professionals, e.g. doctor, speech therapist	6	2	18	4
Working with other teachers	9	-	5	2
Information about the area in which the centre was located	7	-	10	2
Information about the organisation of the centre	7	5	9	3

Of particular note is the occurrence in the last list of the four areas (assurance/moral support, strategies for particular children, programming and administration) which were also ranked as the most important areas in which help should be received. That is, the four specific areas that teachers indicated were the most important in which to receive some support, also rank among the six most frequently mentioned areas in which they indicated they did not receive satisfactory assistance.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO BEGINNING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS

Sources of Help

Respondents were asked how often they had someone to turn to if problems arose. Table 9 shows that all but four of the teachers felt that there was someone to turn to always or most times.

Table 9: Frequency with which beginning teachers indicated that there was someone to turn to if problems arose

FREQUENCY	STATE (N=58)	COMMUNITY (N=13)
Always	38	5
Most times	17	7
Occasionally	3	1
Not at all	-	-

A frequency distribution of the types of people to whom beginning teachers felt able to turn is shown in Table 10. Three-quarters of beginning teachers felt they could turn to their advisers when problems arose. The director or teacher-in-charge and the aide or assistant were also fairly frequent sources of help for problems. Sources of support each mentioned by between three and ten teachers were: other early childhood teachers, school principals, committee members, regional preschool officers, other teachers, friends and family. It should be noted, however, that not all these sources are available to all teachers. For example, nearly half of the beginning teachers were themselves directors or teachers-in-charge, and most of these would not have other teachers in the same centre; regional preschool officers and school principals are found only within the state sector. It is interesting to note that half of the kindergarten teachers reported that they could seek advice on problems from committee members.

Table 10: Persons to whom beginning teachers turn most frequently if problems arise

SOURCE	STATE (N=56)	COMMUNITY (N=14)
Preschool advisers	46	11
Director/teacher-in-charge	27	2
Aides/assistants	10	7
Early childhood teachers - not from same centre	10	-
Early childhood teachers - from same centre	7	2
School principals	8	-
Committee members	-	7
Family or friends	5	1
Regional preschool officers	5	-
Other teachers (not ECT)	3	2
Other	1	2

Support in Specific Areas

More specific information about the best sources of help in particular areas of need can be gained by examining Table 11. This table sets out, for each area of need, the sources of help the beginning teachers perceived to be the best.

It can be seen that for many of the areas listed the preschool adviser was perceived as the best source of support by the beginning teachers. For many of the areas, however, other sources of support were also highly valued. For example: assurance and moral support was reported to be best provided by a variety of sources including the director or teacher-in-charge, aides or assistants, preschool advisers, early childhood teachers and parents; the best sources of help for administration were the director or teacher-in-charge and the preschool advisers; in the area of working with particular parents, the aides or assistants were reported to be the most helpful, as they were in providing information about the organisation of the centre and about the area in which the centre was located; parents were also a frequently-mentioned source of help in this last area.

Special Support throughout the Year

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had received special support throughout the year as a first-year teacher. Fifty-six per cent and 36 per cent of teachers from the state and community sectors respectively indicated that they had received such support. Those sources of support listed most frequently were: contact with the advisory teacher, meetings of first-year teachers, visits from the regional preschool officer and help from other staff. Many teachers received more than one form of support. While the most common category - 'contact with the advisory teacher' - is a form of support that is available for all teachers, a number of beginning teachers reported that their relationship with their adviser included an element of extra attention in either time or content.

In addition to these descriptions of support, four people gave some adverse comments. One indicated that she had received some negative feedback about being a first-year-out teacher; another indicated that although the adviser was available, she did not give 'freely' and the respondent was dissatisfied with her relationship; two indicated that the meeting of first and second year teachers early in the year should have been followed up.

Table 11: Beginning teachers' perceptions of best sources of help in particular areas

AREA	SOURCE OF HELP																	
	No help received	Director/teacher-in-charge	Preschool advisers from state system	Preschool advisers from the C.S.K.	ECT - from same centre	ECT - not from same centre	Primary teachers	Other teachers	Aides/assistants	Parents	School principals	Regional preschool officers	College lecturers	Guidance personnel	Early Childhood Resource Centre	Early Childhood Teachers Association	Written material	Other source
Assurance/moral support	1	33	19	12	7	19	1	7	28	16	5	7						6
Programming	7	8	36	7	3	14		5	4	1	2	17	6	1	2		8	1
Teaching strategies	10	14	25	5	4	18		8	9	2		3	9	1	3		13	1
Classroom management and organisation	14	8	28	7	2	14		8	17	2	1	4	6	1	1		11	1
Strategies for particular children	2	13	37	8	2	7	1	5	15	5	2	6	6	9	1	4	6	4
Strategies for beginning with your group(s)	23	10	12	1	4	9	2	6	11	1	1		5		1		8	
Equipment selection	26	12	8	2	4	6	1	3	15	3		1	4		3		6	1
Guidance in your "reflective" thinking, e.g. clarification of your beliefs about how children learn	14	10	29	3	2	12	3	4	6	1	1	8	1	1	2	3	12	2
Legal matters	26	11	16	5	3	3	1	1		2	3	10					4	3
Administration	11	24	16	5	7	7		3	3		9	7	1				1	2
Working with your aide/assistant	28	12	14	3	3	8	1	4	6	1	2	4	2		1		4	1
Working with particular parents	1	13	13	2	3	5	1		21	1	5	2	2	3	1		2	1
Working with committees	29	20	4	6	3	3	1	2	3	3	4	1	1					3
Working with other professionals, e.g. doctor, speech therapist	35	11	10	3	2	6	2	2	2		2		1	5				3
Working with other teachers	38	5	7	3	2	2	1	3	2	1	2	1	1	2			1	2
Information about area in which centre located	21	13	5		7	2	1	4	25	14	5	4			1		2	3
Information about the organisation of the centre	15	19	5	2		9	3	2	25	4	5	3		1	1		2	3

Opportunities for Professional Growth

The types of opportunities which respondents reported as being available for professional growth are listed in Table 12. This table shows that in-service seminars were the most frequently reported source of professional development for beginning teachers. Of the preschool teachers who mentioned in-service seminars, nine referred specifically to the Early Literacy In-service Course. Seven of the kindergarten teachers made specific reference to seminars organised by the C. & K. Association.

Informal discussions or formal meetings with other teachers were a relatively frequent source of professional support for beginning teachers. In addition, eight teachers said that their professional growth had been enhanced through meetings of the Early Childhood Teachers Association. In all, sixteen teachers reported being members of this association. Other sources of professional growth listed by ten or more teachers were: pupil-free days, preschool advisers or advisory teachers, personal professional reading and the knowledge and skills gained through the experience of teaching young children.

Table 12: Beginning teachers' perceptions of their sources of opportunities for professional growth

OPPORTUNITIES	STATE (N=53)	COMMUNITY (N=15)
In-service seminars and programs	33	12
Pupil-free days	12	-
Informal discussions with other teachers	10	3
Formal teacher meetings	8	5
Early Childhood Teachers Association meetings	6	2
Preschool advisers	9	2
Aides or assistants	2	2
Resource centres	4	3
Visits to other centres	3	-
Personal reading	10	5
Experience of teaching	7	3
Other (further study, college resources, paraprofessionals, head office)	2	3

Advisory Visits

All but two of the respondents worked in a situation where they received support from a preschool adviser, either from the Department of Education or the C. & K. Association. Tables 13 and 14 present data with respect to the timing of the contacts with the advisers.

Table 13: Reported time of initial contact of beginning teachers with their adviser

TIME	STATE (N=57)	COMMUNITY (N=14)
Prior to beginning teaching	11	1
Within one week of beginning teaching	15	1
Within one month of beginning teaching	26	6
Within two months of beginning teaching	4	5
More than two months after beginning teaching	1	1

Table 14: Reported frequency of contact between beginning teachers and advisers

	VISITS TO CENTRE		OTHER CONTACT	
FREQUENCY OF VISITS	State (N=57)	Community (N=14)	State (N=55)	Community (N=14)
Weekly	2	-	7	-
Monthly	30	1	23	3
Once a term	21	9	14	7
Less than once a term	2	3	4	2
Other	2	1	7	2

Most teachers had their initial contact with their advisers within one month of beginning teaching. Within the state sector, some 46 per cent of first-year teachers had contact with their advisory teacher either prior to beginning teaching or within one week of beginning teaching. Within the community sector, six of the fourteen respondents did not have contact with their adviser for at least two months after beginning teaching.

Table 14 shows that most teachers had visits from their advisers either monthly or once a term, although a few had less frequent visits. The 'other' category of visits refers to responses of two preschool teachers who reported that their preschool was the advisory teacher's base, and to one kindergarten teacher who reported that the frequency of advisory visits 'depends on needs'. Most beginning teachers also had other contact with their advisory teacher at least once per term with nearly half of the teachers reporting at least monthly contact apart from advisory visits. The 'other' category of additional contact refers to eight beginning teachers who reported that they had other contact with their adviser as needed, and one who said that the director had frequent contact and passed on information.

There was a tendency for teachers in urban areas to have more frequent advisory

visits: for example, 58 per cent of non-urban compared with 38 per cent of urban teachers reported having advisory visits less frequently than monthly. There was, however, very little difference in the frequency of other forms of contact between teachers teaching in various parts of Queensland and their advisers.

Sixty-nine beginning teachers commented on how their advisers worked with them. From the beginning teachers' perspective, the most common functions performed by advisers were acting as a 'sounding board' for the development of the individual teacher's ideas, being a support and resource to the beginning teacher and helping to build the teacher's confidence. Beginning teachers reported that the main techniques used by advisers were discussion with teachers and providing resources. Beginning teachers also reported that advisers gave information, observed children and demonstrated particular techniques. It was reported that the topics most frequently discussed with advisers were programming and particular individual children - some teachers referred specifically to problem children and a few to children with special needs. Other topics discussed were classroom management, administration, teaching strategies, dealing with parents and, in the community sector, working with the committee.

Contact with Other Teachers

Sixty-five per cent of beginning teachers working in the state sector, and 41 per cent of those working in the community sector considered that they had adequate contact with other early childhood teachers. Of those who did not feel their contact was adequate, all gave some comment about the problem. Six indicated that it would be difficult to increase contact because they were in relatively isolated centres. Others gave suggestions for how their contact might be increased. The main suggestions were that there should be more conferences or meetings of first-year teachers and more visits to other centres to observe teachers.

In addition, respondents were asked to describe what their gains from this contact were, or could be. The most common benefit, mentioned by fifty-two teachers, was that contact with other early childhood teachers allowed for an exchange of ideas on specific topics. Other benefits of increased contact, each noted by between one-quarter and one-third of the beginning teachers were: that contact with other teachers gave them a broader perspective allowing them to place their work in a context, that it provided moral support , or that it helped them to develop professionally in a general sense.

POTENTIAL SUPPORT FOR THE BEGINNING TEACHER

Beginning teachers were asked two questions about the support that they considered should be available to beginning teachers. One dealt with who might be able to help beginning teachers, and the other with how that help might best be given.

Sources of Potential Help

The types of people identified by beginning teachers as best able to help are listed in Table 15. Preschool advisers were clearly seen as being the best potential source of support, being listed by sixty of the seventy-one respondents. Other early childhood teachers, the teacher-in-charge or director and the aide or assistant were also each named by more than ten teachers as being a best potential source of help. That is, those people currently working in the system, and with whom beginning teachers had indicated as being their current supports were also seen as being their best potential supports.

Table 15: Number of beginning teachers identifying various types of person as the best potential source of help

BEST SOURCE OF HELP*	STATE (N=57)	COMMUNITY (N=14)
Preschool advisers	49	11
Other early childhood teachers	18	9
Teacher-in-charge/director	18	5
Aide/assistant	12	4
Primary school principals	10	-
Other beginning teachers	8	-
(Successful) experienced teachers	7	1
Regional preschool officers	7	-
The previous teacher	7	2
Family	2	-
Friends	2	-
ELIC tutors	1	-
Parents	-	3
C. & K.	-	1
Committee	-	1
Specialists	-	1

* Many respondents named more than one person.

How Potential Support Might be Given

Most beginning teachers reported that they preferred a relationship in which the advisory teacher, or other helper, gave them both support and advice. Beginning teachers generally would prefer advisory teachers to discuss issues and problems with them, and to share ideas and to give suggestions for how tasks might be approached or problems might be tackled. A few beginning teachers considered that advisory teachers should demonstrate particular techniques. On the other hand, one beginning teacher commented that 'advisory teachers should be forward in pointing out where teachers have problems, instead of letting them discover them'. This was, however, clearly an idiosyncratic viewpoint with discussion, guidance and a 'low-key friendly relationship' much preferred. Three teachers stressed the importance of critical feedback on their work. A few beginning teachers reported that personal visits should be supplemented by telephone contact. A small number of teachers also stressed the importance of ready or even immediate access to help if it is required. Other forms of preferred support were each mentioned by four to six beginning teachers. These were: seminars or workshops for first-year teachers, visits to other centres and the provision of written information.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has investigated the induction into teaching of first-year preschool and kindergarten teachers in Queensland. Data for the study were obtained largely from a questionnaire survey of beginning preschool and kindergarten teachers; this was supplemented by interviews with preschool and C. & K. advisers.

At the beginning of the year, the areas in which the largest proportion of first-year teachers expressed confidence were interacting with children, communicating with parents, program planning and story-telling. The areas in which the largest proportion of teachers expressed a lack of confidence were program planning, communicating with parents, administration and the teaching of music. It is hardly surprising therefore that teachers reported that they wanted most help in programming, administration, and strategies for particular children. Above all, however, teachers wanted assurance and moral support, especially right at the start of their teaching careers. As the year progressed, teachers reported a tendency to become more concerned with task-oriented and child-oriented issues and less concerned for their personal security.

In the sense that beginning early childhood teachers reported that their concerns developed from concerns about self to pupil-oriented concerns, these results are consistent with the stages of concern of teachers generally which were postulated by Fuller (1974). The particular needs of early childhood teachers, however, differ from those of primary and secondary teachers. Specifically, the early childhood teachers in this study were less concerned about discipline and assessing pupils' work than, as indicated by previous research, were primary and secondary teachers (see Veeman, 1984). They did report, on the other hand, a greater concern for administrative matters. This is hardly surprising given that 40 per cent of the preschool and kindergarten teachers in this study were teaching in single-unit centres and that nearly half were directors or teachers-in-charge. Moreover, teachers may need some experience in administration before they feel a sense of confidence in this area.

The study indicates that the needs of a majority of beginning teachers were being adequately met. Fewer than one-third of respondents indicated that they had not received satisfactory assistance in a number of areas of support. Over 90 per cent of beginning teachers reported that they had someone to turn to for advice if problems arose. The most frequent sources of help were advisory teachers, the director or teacher-in-charge of the centre and aides or assistants. Other sources were reported as being of help in particular areas; parents, for instance, were seen as a useful source of information about the local area. Most beginning teachers had some contact with their centre before commencing duty and a majority had met other staff of the centre prior to commencing duty. The beginning teachers listed a large number of sources of opportunities for professional growth; the most frequently mentioned being in-service seminars and teacher meetings.

With respect specifically to advisory visits, 85 per cent of beginning early childhood teachers had contact with their advisers within one month of taking up duty. Most had visits from their adviser at least once a term, and most beginning teachers also had other forms of contact with their advisers at least once a term. Yet, about one in seven beginning teachers did not receive a visit from an adviser until more than a month after they began teaching. The advisers reported that they attempted to work with teachers in an advisory and supportive role rather than in a directive role. The role which advisers preferred to take was very much in accord with beginning teachers' perceptions of the role: the most common functions which

beginning teachers reported that advisers played were providing a sounding board for the development of individual teacher's ideas and providing ideas and advice to beginning teachers. Support for the advisory program is also implied in beginning teachers' responses to the questions of who might best be able to help beginning teachers and how this help might best be provided. The most common source of potential assistance indicated by the beginning teachers was advisory teacher visits, and the most frequent suggestion for how this should operate was that the advisers should visit centres to discuss issues and problems with teachers and make suggestions about approaches to teaching.

The study did, however, reveal some areas of possible concern. The provision of assurance and moral support, and advice on programming, administrative matters, and strategies for dealing with particular individual children were seen as important areas of need by beginning teachers. They were also among the areas for which the highest proportions of beginning teachers reported that they had not received satisfactory assistance.

The finding that 15 per cent of beginning teachers had to wait more than one month before receiving a visit from their adviser indicates that consideration might be given to arranging advisory visits so that, where feasible, all teachers receive visits within a reasonable period after they have commenced teaching. This suggestion, however, should be set in context. Given that the first two weeks of the school year are spent enrolling children, interviewing parents and helping children settle in, many advisers feel that this is an inappropriate time to visit centres. Moreover, within the state sector, new advisory teachers are involved in their own orientation exercise during the first two weeks of the school year and are, therefore, unavailable to visit centres. There are also difficulties in arranging visits to preschools and kindergartens in remote areas.

Consideration might be given to providing more opportunities for first-year teachers to meet with other early childhood teachers. About half of the teachers felt that they wanted more frequent contact with other preschool or kindergarten teachers. The beginning teachers reported that meeting with other early childhood teachers provided opportunities to exchange ideas on specific topics, gave them a broader perspective on their work, provided them with moral support and helped them to develop professionally. These meetings, then, were clearly seen by beginning teachers as playing a valuable role in their induction into the teaching profession.

To conclude: this study has investigated, in broad terms, the nature of the induction of preschool and kindergarten teachers into the teaching profession. It has also emphasised the individual nature of induction and the needs of beginning teachers. This can be illustrated in relation to beginning teachers' reported confidence in communicating with parents. Communication with parents was one of the areas in which the largest proportion of beginning teachers felt they lacked confidence; it was also an area which a substantial number of beginning teachers felt was one of their areas of confidence. Thus, while there are broad principles which should guide the induction of preschool and kindergarten teachers, induction must also be sensitive to the individual needs and concerns of particular beginning teachers.

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APPENDIX I

BOARD OF TEACHER EDUCATION

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE INDUCTION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS WHO BEGAN TEACHING IN 1987

Many of these questions can be answered by placing a tick ( ) in an appropriate box. In some questions you are asked to write a few words in the spaces provided. At the end of the schedule you are invited to make comments that may provide additional information which you feel you can contribute to the study.

Any queries you have about the study should be directed to Margo Bampton at the Board of Teacher Education, phone (07) 870 7168.

Completed questionnaires should be returned, using the reply-paid envelope, by 30 October.

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1. Have you worked in more than one centre in 1987? (please tick)

Yes	[ ]
No	[ ]

*If YES, the following questions refer to your experience in **ONE CENTRE ONLY**.*

*Can you please select the first preschool or kindergarten in which you taught for **three months or more** and answer the questions **with reference to that particular centre**.*

Teaching Situation

2. Please indicate what type of preschool or kindergarten you work in:

A State preschool [ ]

A community preschool or kindergarten

- affiliated with the Creche and Kindergarten Association [ ]
- not affiliated with the Creche and Kindergarten Association, but receiving their advisory service, i.e. a "contact centre" [ ]
- not affiliated with the Creche and Kindergarten Association, and not receiving their advisory service [ ]

3. What is the postcode of this centre? _____

4. Is your preschool or kindergarten a -

- single unit (1 teacher) [ ]
- double unit (2 teachers) [ ]
- triple unit (3 teachers) [ ]
- other (please specify) [ ]

_____

_____

_____

5. Please indicate how many groups of children in their immediate preschool year, and younger, are in your unit in any typical week.

		NUMBER OF GROUPS			
1.	Children in their immediate preschool year	1	2	3	4
2.	Younger children	1	2	3	4
3.	Mixture of 1 and 2 in the same group	1	2	3	4

6. Approximately how many children are you responsible for in any one week?

_____

7. What position do you hold?

- Teacher-in-charge [ ]
- Director [ ]
- Co-director [ ]
- Teacher [ ]

35

Many of the following questions are open-ended as we wish to gain an indication of your personal experiences as a beginning teacher.

You may continue to write on the back of the page if you wish.

Beginning Teaching

8. Prior to your first day of duty, did you have some contact with the centre?

Yes [ ]
No [ ]

If YES, please describe this contact and how it helped you.

9.(a) In which areas were you most confident when you began teaching?

(b) In which areas were you not so confident when you began teaching?

10.(a) What type of help do you consider you needed **most** in your first few months' teaching?

(b) Have your needs changed throughout the year?

Yes [ ]
No [ ]

If YES, please explain:

Support received by the beginning teacher

In the following questions, we are asking about the support you have actually received. Please answer in accordance with what your experience has been.

11. Do you feel you have someone to turn to if problems arise?

Yes, always [ ]
Yes, most times [ ]
Yes, occasionally [ ]
No, not at all [ ]

If YES, who is this, most frequently?

You may put more than one person if two or more are very important to you. Please give people's roles rather than personal names.

12. Were you given a special introduction or orientation when you first took up duty?

Yes [ ]
No [ ]

If YES, please describe this:

13. Throughout the year, have you received any special support as a first-year teacher?

Yes [ ]
No [ ]

If YES, please describe this.

14. Where do your opportunities for professional growth usually come from?

15. *Below are listed areas in which the beginning teacher may have been given assistance at some time.*

Can you please indicate, on the scale provided, how important it has been for you to have support in each of these areas (please circle the appropriate number).

	Very important			Moderately important	Not at all important	Not applicable
Assurance/moral support	1	2	3	4	5	6
Programming	1	2	3	4	5	6
Teaching strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6
Classroom management and organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Strategies for particular children	1	2	3	4	5	6
Strategies for beginning with your group(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Equipment selection	1	2	3	4	5	6
Guidance in your "reflective" thinking, e.g. clarification of your beliefs about how children learn	1	2	3	4	5	6
Legal matters	1	2	3	4	5	6
Administration	1	2	3	4	5	6
Working with your aide/assistant	1	2	3	4	5	6
Working with particular parents	1	2	3	4	5	6
Working with committees	1	2	3	4	5	6
Working with other professionals, e.g. doctor, speech therapist	1	2	3	4	5	6
Working with other teachers	1	2	3	4	5	6
Information about the area in which the centre was located	1	2	3	4	5	6
Information about the organisation of the centre	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other (please specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5	6

16. *Can you please indicate, using the key provided, who, or where, was the best source of help in each of these areas. (You may select more than one item from the key.)*

Key:
0 = no help received
1 = director/teacher-in-charge

Preschool Advisers
2 = from the State system
3 = from the Creche and Kindergarten Association

Teachers
4 = early childhood - from your centre
5 = early childhood - not from your centre
6 = primary
7 = other teachers
8 = aides/assistants
9 = parents
10 = school principals
11 = regional preschool officers
12 = college lecturers
13 = guidance personnel
14 = Early Childhood Resource Centre
15 = Early Childhood Teachers Association
16 = written material
17 = other source

Assurance/moral support	_____
Programming	_____
Teaching strategies	_____
Classroom management and organisation	_____
Strategies for particular children	_____
Strategies for beginning with your group(s)	_____
Equipment selection	_____
Guidance in your "reflective" thinking, e.g. clarification of your beliefs about how children learn	_____
Legal matters	_____
Administration	_____
Working with your aide/assistant	_____
Working with particular parents	_____
Working with committees	_____
Working with other professionals, e.g. doctor, speech therapist	_____
Working with other teachers	_____
Information about the area in which the centre was located	_____
Information about the organisation of the centre	_____
Other (please specify)	
_____	_____

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17. Are there any of these areas in which you have felt in need of some support, but have not received satisfactory assistance?

Assurance/moral support	[ ]
Programming	[ ]
Teaching strategies	[ ]
Classroom management and organisation	[ ]
Strategies for particular children	[ ]
Strategies for beginning with your group(s)	[ ]
Equipment selection	[ ]
Guidance in your "reflective" thinking, e.g. clarification of your beliefs about how children learn	[ ]
Legal matters	[ ]
Administration	[ ]
Working with your aide/assistant	[ ]
Working with particular parents	[ ]
Working with committees	[ ]
Working with other professionals, e.g. doctor, speech therapist	[ ]
Working with other teachers	[ ]
Information about the area in which the centre was located	[ ]
Information about the organisation of the centre	[ ]
Other (please specify) _____	[ ]
None of the above	[ ]

18. Do you consider you have adequate contact with other early childhood teachers?

Yes	[ ]
No	[ ]

If NO, how do you think the amount of contact you have could be increased?

_____

_____

_____

19. What would/do you gain from this contact?

_____

_____

_____

Advisory Visits

Please answer this section only if you work in

- *a State preschool; or*
- *a kindergarten receiving the advisory service of the Creche and Kindergarten Association.*

20. When was your initial contact with an adviser?

Prior to beginning teaching	[ ]
Within one week of beginning teaching	[ ]
Within one month of beginning teaching	[ ]
Within two months of beginning teaching	[ ]
More than two months after beginning teaching	[ ]

If prior to beginning teaching, was contact **at that time** of benefit to you?

Yes	[ ]
No	[ ]

21. About how often do you have personal visits from an assigned adviser?

Weekly	[ ]
Monthly	[ ]
Once a term	[ ]
Less than once a term	[ ]
Other (please specify)	
_____	[ ]

22. About how frequently do you have other contact (e.g. telephone) with an assigned adviser?

Weekly	[ ]
Monthly	[ ]
Once a term	[ ]
Less than once a term	[ ]
Other (please specify)	
_____	[ ]

23. In what ways does your adviser work with you?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Potential support for the beginning teacher

In the following questions, we are asking about the support that you think ***should be available*** *to the beginning teacher (this may be the same as you actually receive).*

24. Who do you think is **best** able to help the beginning teacher? (please give people's roles and not personal names)

25. How do you think help is **best** given to the beginning teacher?

General Comment

26. Do you have any further comments about your needs or experiences as a first-year teacher?

Background Information

27. Your qualifications (please write the full title of your qualifications and the awarding institution):

Qualification Institution

_____

_____

_____

28. When did you complete your formal teaching preparation?

_____ (month) _____ (year)

29. When did you begin teaching?

_____ (month) _____ (year)

30. Are you a member of any professional teacher associations?

Yes [ ]
No [ ]

If YES, please specify:

_____

_____

Thank you very much.

APPENDIX II

MEMBERSHIP OF RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Mr J.A. Tainton (Chair)
Assistant Director-General, Development and Portfolio Services, Department of Education, Queensland

Mr M.T.A. Byrne
Senior Education Officer, Research Services Branch, Department of Education, Queensland

Professor J. Elkins
Professor of Special Education and Head, Schonell Educational Research Centre, University of Queensland

Mr N.H. Fry
Executive Officer, Board of Teacher Education

Dr E.D. Hobbs
Senior Education Officer, Research Services Branch, Department of Education, Queensland

Mr A.R. Johnson
Principal, Rangeville State School, Toowoomba

Associate Professor P.W. Marland
Director, Centre for the Study of Teaching and Teaching Development, School of Education, James Cook University of North Queensland

Dr D.A. Price
Senior Lecturer in Education and Campus Coordinator of Practice Teaching, Mount Gravatt Campus, Brisbane College of Advanced Education

Mrs M. Rosser
Part-time lecturer, Carseldine Campus, Brisbane College of Advanced Education